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## Daily Briefing

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### Legislators drop amendment banning outsourcing targets

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In a victory for the Office of Management and Budget, lawmakers have dropped language from the fiscal 2003 omnibus appropriations bill that would have curtailed OMB's drive to let private contractors bid on federal jobs.

House and Senate conferees scrapped a House-passed provision that would have prohibited OMB from setting numerical targets for competitive sourcing, potentially halting the entire initiative. Instead, they approved a Senate-passed measure, sponsored by Sen. Craig Thomas, R-Wyo., that prohibits "arbitrary" targets but is not a threat to OMB's program.

Conferees also signed off on language requiring OMB to explain how it developed the competitive sourcing targets to the House and Senate Appropriations Committees, according to Rep. Jim Moran, D-Va., who sponsored the House-passed measure. Specifically, OMB will have 30 days to report on the analysis used to set the targets after the bill becomes law, he said.

"It's not what we wanted, but it puts the administration in the position of having to do a true in-depth analysis, and if it is not done well, they will need legislative language to continue [with competitive sourcing]," said Moran. In Moran's view, the new language requires OMB to halt the competitive sourcing initiative while officials prepare this analysis, he added.

Thomas and OMB were satisfied with the agreement.

"Sen. Thomas is very pleased with the conferees' decision," said Thomas spokeswoman Carrie Sloan. In a statement, Federal Procurement Policy Administrator Angela Styles,

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OMB's point person on competitive sourcing, congratulated Thomas for his leadership.

As of late Wednesday, conferees were still working to reach a final deal on the omnibus spending bill itself, but the competitive sourcing issue had been settled in favor of Thomas and OMB.

The provisions focused on numerical targets, the key to implementing OMB's competitive sourcing initiative at federal agencies. OMB has told agencies to compete or directly outsource 15 percent of their commercial jobs—127,500 jobs in all—by October, although it has said that some agencies may fall short of this target.

The House-passed provision would have blocked any numerical targets for competitive sourcing. Thomas' provision, by contrast, blocks targets that are not based on "considered research and past analysis." Additionally, targets must be "consistent with the stated mission" of agencies under Thomas' provision.

Federal union leaders opposed Thomas' language. "[Administration officials] acknowledge in the conference report that quotas are bad—except when they set them," said Bobby Harnage, president of the American Federation of Government Employees.

The deal comes as lawmakers are launching new efforts to halt competitive sourcing at individual agencies. On Tuesday, Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., [introduced a bill that would classify air traffic control employees](#) as "inherently governmental," putting them off-limits for potential outsourcing. Air traffic controllers, air traffic technicians, and flight service specialists would be protected from competition under the bill. It would also prevent the Federal Aviation Administration from holding a competitive sourcing study on 2,700 flight service specialist jobs, which would be the biggest job competition in government.

Lawmakers are also trying to stop competitive sourcing at the Army Corps of Engineers. The Senate version of the omnibus includes language that would prevent the Corps from privatizing, divesting, or transferring any civil works missions to other agencies. An OMB official said the measure is "directly counter" to the competitive sourcing initiative, although it is unclear whether it would prevent the Corps from participating in the Army's massive competitive sourcing program, known as the "Third Wave."

“With the third wave we’re not talking about missions, functions and responsibilities, we’re talking about the manpower,” Army spokeswoman Nicole Dowell said Tuesday. “If [the provision] does become law we’ll obviously take a look at it and if we need to make adjustments in the execution of the Third Wave we will.”

Army planners are reviewing 32,269 Corps jobs for possible inclusion in the initiative, which could affect 154,910 civilian employees throughout the Army.



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